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Argentina: Human Rights Image

Argentine officials recently announced a number of moves apparently designed to improve the country's image abroad on respect for human rights. The decision to publicize the moves indicates that President Videla's administration is growing increasingly sensitive to the US position on human rights, and particularly to US voting in international financial institutions. The measures reflect little if any substantive change in government policy.

The measures include:

- Release of 342 persons from executive custody.
- Expediting the trials of almost 1,000 subversives in federal and military courts.
- Possible reinstatement of the constitutional right to leave the country.
- Banning two issues of a far right, racist magazine.

These measures appear more cosmetic than substantive and probably are intended mainly to counteract adverse publicity on human rights. The suspension of the right to leave the country, for instance, was reviewed—and extended—last spring for 150 days beginning May 1. The new announcement could mean that the restraints will be removed before the suspension runs out in September. The banning of the two issues of the magazine does not affect its future.

The Videla government specifically wants to influence the US position on large bank loans up for vote in international financial institutions.

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